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AND *K*
Of the Sickness
OF
Sarah his Wife,
AND
Their three Children.

M A D E L E Y:
PRINTED BY J. EDMUNDS.

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[Entered at Stationer's Hall.]

THE

HISTORY

OF THE

WILKINS

Three Children

W. D. L. A. R.
PRINTED BY J. EDWARDS

1800

[Entered in Sturges's Hall]

THE
HISTORY
OF
ISAAC JENKINS,
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OF
Sarah his Wife,
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IT was a terrible time, the latter end of the year 1783! Many a poor body will remember it as long as he lives; and I shall never forget it myself. In the Spring the cold unkindly East wind shrivelled up the young corn, which seemed to shrink back, as if afraid of being touched by the blast. The fields looked all bald and fallow, at the season when they used to be so tufted and green! In summer the Eastwind ceased, it is true; but what the better for that? when the South-

West sprung up and piped so many watery tunes! there was nothing but squalls with showers between, from morning till night, and from night till morning, if one had been awake to hear. Then when the wind dropped, it would rain for eight and forty hours in a breath. And the wet was as hurtful in June and July as the cold had been in April and May. "Surely," said the farmers, as they looked over their weeping and water-soaken grounds, "we shall have a fine August and September to get in what harvest there is. "It has been cold in spring and rainy all summer; but good weather must come at last; it cannot blow and spit for ever." Alas! the farmers were mistaken in their calculation: the blustering winds and the pelting showers went on all autumn along, as fresh as they began at first in the summer. The crops, light as they were, were almost half spoiled on the ground into the bargain. To make bad worse, at seed time there was no getting the corn into the earth in many parts, where the land was strong; for now the rain was heavier, harder and more constant than before; and it battered the wheat-lands and made the clays as stiff as if they had been trodden on purpose to make bricks. What was to become of the poor, now their leasing was all eaten and gone? It was bad already with them and a worse look-out. By December corn came to be ten shillings a strike. How could a labouring man maintain his family

mily on six shillings a week, and, may be, less than that? God be thanked! there are kind charitable folks in the world; or else many an honest poor creature would have perished for want that winter! But those charitable folks bestirred themselves in time and went about the different parishes, making collections of money for the poor. And nobody, that could afford it, was so hard-hearted as to deny giving something; and in many parishes hundreds of pounds over and above the poors' rates were raised: and some was laid out in bread and some in potatoes, to be distributed among those that wanted, in the course of the winter.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding all this assistance, there came great sickness over all the country; and numbers died of the spotted fever, especially among the poor. It went worst with the little children, for they died, generally one and sometimes two or more, where there were six or seven in a family. And nothing was to be heard in the dusk of the evening but the church bells tolling for funerals, unless it was the howling of the wind or the hooting of screech-owls. It was melancholy for a labouring man to hear as he walked home across the fields from his work towards the fall of night.

In this hard time, you may needs think that some parishes would be worse off than others. In some there was hardly any substantial person. All the farmers were little

farmers, at rack-rent, hardly better in the world than their own workmen. It was as much as they could do to maintain their own families and keep their cattle alive, for hay and straw were scarce and dear as well as corn. Then how could they give away to others, when they were almost in want themselves? It was not to be done; or they could only give away a little skimmed milk, or a meal's meat now and then to their next-door neighbour.

In one of these parishes—it was at the foot of the Titterstone Clee-Hill—there lived a poor labouring man, one Isaac Jenkins by name. He had five children as small as they well could be, beside one that had been killed by misfortune somewhat above two years before. If ever you went that way, you will remember his cottage. It stood by itself, close by the Ludlow road side as you come upon the Common at the bottom of the hill: and was just about two stones' throw beyond *MARTHA'S*, as they call her, at the sign of the *Horse-Shoe*, where the waggons stop to bait, when they are lugging coal from Mr. Botfield's works to Ludlow and beyond.

Isaac's wife had been sick of the fever, and was just getting her strength a little, but very weak still. Three of the five children had caught it from their mother; and the middlemost lay for dead. If it had not been for his breathing, his mother would sometimes have taken him for quite dead, and God knows
there

there was but little life left in him. His eyes were dull, his face sunk and of a dirty brown colour; round about his lips was a foul crust, almost as black as a floe; you could see, when his mouth was a little way open, that his tongue was all brown and rough, like the bark of a tree: his breath was also very bad: and his body was broke out all over dark-red spots. The child was a dismal, aye and a pitiful sight to see. He asked for nothing, and made no answer when he was spoken to, and took no notice of any thing around him: but kept moaning and picking the blanket most of the time, as if there had been feathers upon it. However, there was no feather on the blanket nor any such thing; but the child knew not what he did. For why? because his head was constantly roving and rambling by reason of the fever. It ran so high.

The mother would fain have sent for the Doctor. But he lived at a distance, quite at Ludlow; and she could not pay him for his physic, much less for his journey. 'Tis true, about a week before, a quack doctor had called and left some white powder, which was nothing but salt-petre, and did the mother and children no good but harm. However, as they could only raise a few half-pence to pay him, he came no more; for your quack doctors care not a farthing whether they kill or cure; all they want is to fleece those that know no better—I knew this one very well,

I saw his own wife die of this fever under his hands, and for all I could say, he would bleed her two or three times after she had been ill a month and more! and the Rector of Winstanlow assured me that about two out of three died of those that he doctored, for all he was a Conjuror besides.

The day Isaac's wife surely expected her sickest child to die, Patty the Maid of the *Horse-Shoe* just looked in to ask, as she said, how they all did, but more for the sake of telling the news. For as the Parson of Hopton was out a cock-shooting, his gun-barrel had burst in his hand, and shattered his arm terribly, and he bled till he fainted, and "it is thought" said the girl, "he'll be dead directly." By and By, Sarah saw Mr. Langford, the surgeon from Ludlow, come galloping along, with his horse's head all white with foam and his belly all splashed with mire. Not long afterwards as she was ruefully looking upon the children, and especially upon him that was worst, sore-grieved that she could lend them no help, a thought came into her head. Thinks she, "I have heard say that Mr. Langford is a fair spoken gentleman, and has done many a good turn to poor folks, and perhaps as he comes back, he'll not be quite in such an hurry. So I'll make bold to speak to him and ask him to look at this poor baby and the two others; and perhaps he can tell something that will do them service; and keep one or two of them

“ them alive, that I may not lose all at once;
 “ and, may be, he’ll trust me till better times;
 “ and then I’ll pay him for his trouble, as
 “ fast as I can, truly and honestly.” This
 thought afforded her some relief for the pre-
 sent; for the poor creature was almost heart-
 broken to see her children, some dying and
 the rest half famished about her, and herself
 not able to do the least thing for them. So
 she set herself to hearken carefully, and when-
 ever she heard the tread of an horse along the
 road to Hopton, long before Mr. Langford
 could have come back, if he had been mount-
 ed upon a race-horse at full speed, out she
 bolted her head from the door and looked
 wistfully towards the hill. At last—but it
 seemed a weary while first—she espied Mr.
 Langford sure enough, trotting homewards
 with a man after him. When she had stop-
 ped him, she stammered and faltered and
 could make but a poor story of it; however
 she said enough for him to guess the rest; so he
 alighted from his horse and walked into the
 house. The house was as cold and open as a
 barn; the plaister was fallen by patches from
 the walls, and you could see through the bare
 wicker-work: the wind whistled in at the
 chinks in the door. The floor was damp,
 dirty and ill-smelling withal. But neither
 this nor the miserable plight in which the
 three children lay side by side, hindered Mr.
 Langford a moment from strictly examining
 into the nature of their complaint. When

he had done this, the mother began, sobbing all the time, to protest that she would thankfully, with the help of God, some time pay him his full demand, if she were even to earn the money by going herself and working in the coal-pits on the Hill; but Mr. Langford stopped her short, saying he would settle that matter when the children should be well. He added that the Parson's man, who was going with him for medicines for his master, should leave her, as he passed by, something for the children and herself to take. "What you have to do is to beg some wine, if the neighbourhood will afford any; if not, buy some ale and scrape a little ginger and put a bit or two of sugar into it, when you have warmed it; and give the children a sup now and then in a spoon."—"The Lord in heaven bless you, Sir," cried Sarah, "and return it to you twenty fold, ah! how happy should I be, if I had but a small matter of what Isaac has spent to make himself sick and ill-humoured, to lay out now to hinder these poor innocents from perishing: But it shall go hard if I do not get the one or the other, though I have no money to lay out for either, for the two shillings I had from the overseer are every farthing gone." This she muttered to herself, while a tear trickled down her face. Mr. Langford did not perfectly hear her, though he caught something about Isaac spending his money. Fearing there-
fore

fore left she should fall to blessing and praying for him again in the warmth of her thankfulness, he went away with a promise to look at the children again as soon as it should be necessary, for he should often go that road. The mother now felt lighter and stronger all of a sudden; in spite of the remains of her disorder. Grief it is true, lay heavy enough on her heart, still, but not so heavy as before, and she was less inclined to despond and pine. Instead of sitting down drooping in despair, with an elbow on each knee and her face hid in her hands, now and then letting fall a tear, and as she wiped it from her cheek, casting a sorrowful look at the children on the bed, she took her black crock and rinsed it briskly at the spout of water close by the garden hedge. When she had washed it clean, the next thing was to think how she could get a little ale into it; for of wine there was no chance. No body likely to give wine away, lived near; and she could neither leave the children, nor if she could, was she able to walk any distance. There was plenty of ale at the *Horse-Shoe*, but she was afraid of the fat landlady, who was proud and given to scold bitterly; and she apprehended besides that Isaac owed her money. However, it was the only chance; and so she ventured to make for the *Horse-Shoe*. My Landlady was before the door, squabbling with a waggoner about some Birmingham half-pence, which he had paid her and would

not

not change. The poor woman stood modestly by, till the wrangling was over and the landlady seemed pacified. Then, still keeping her distance, she dropped a short curtsy, and "Dr. Langford," says she, "ordered me to get some wine or ale to warm for the children, for if they had not something good, the physic would be of no service to them and it was odds but they died; and, Mrs. Pritchard, if you'll trust me this once for a pint of your ale—I should not ask it for myself; indeed I should not, Madam—and the very first money"——"So, believe me," said the landlady, stopping her short before she had finished, "here's impudence for you; So I am to trust all the world, and support every flattern's dirty brats, I suppose. Gracious me! Trust! yes, to be sure, one may trust beggars till one has lost all credit one's self. Go, Slut, look behind that kitchen door, at your drunkard hulband's score; and see there if I ought to trust for more. No, stop, you shan't go into the house neither; so, get away about your business and don't attempt to bring your filthy vermin distempers into creditable houses, among people of condition, forsooth!" On hearing this, the poor woman felt as if her breath was stopped all of a sudden: she grew pale and put forth her arms with a start from her sides, as if to save herself from dropping. She then turned away and slowly tottered towards her own house,

house, for she could really scarce keep upon her legs. Mrs. Pritchard finding that her petitioner returned not a word to her abuse, and perceiving how faint and poorly she really was, felt her mind so becalmed all at once that she wondered herself which way her passion was flown. She was not particularly ill-natured, though vastly fond of letting her foul tongue wag. "Hark you, Sarah," says she, calling after her in a softened voice; "if so be, 'tis as you say, and the Doctor ordered you to get the ale for the sick children, why that's quite another Story. Isaac's is a long score, to be sure; and I have lost, I may say, many's the good pound, by my tender-heartedness; but I was always too coming and kind, I could never say nay to an old customer, when he was disguised in liquor, and coaxed me so lovingly to fetch t'other mug.—But if it be to make helpless children well, lack-a-day for 'em! I'll let you have the pint. So, look up, and have a good heart. And marry, if need be of another pint to-morrow, and the next day, and the next, why come and fetch it and welcome. And I'll give you a slice of white bread into the bargain, if it will do any good. For the Lord reward me! I defy this slanderous world to say that Martha Pritchard ever wanted the bowels of condescension towards her poor neighbours, ragged and dirty though they be; that is, understand me,

“ me, when they demean themselves properly. And now I bethink me, Sarah, you always stood back when we were at the Church-door together, to let me walk out first; and when we meet in the lane, you always stop short and look down upon the ground, and make a curtsy and say *Your servant, Mrs. Pritchard.*” “ And Sarah! did not I always make answer; “ *So Sarah! how be you, Sarah!* for I always loved to be lowly and humble in spirit. So wait there a bit, and I’ll bring you the drink directly.”

This change of tone in Mrs. Pritchard, and her relenting were as reviving as a cordial to the dejected Sarah. She thanked her and told her that as to the white bread the children were not in a condition to eat any thing: but the Doctor ordered her to scrape a little ginger into the ale——“ Then a race of ginger you shall have, a name of God, and if you had wanted to the value of half a nutmeg, it should not have been denied you.”

So saying, Mrs. Pritchard marched into the house, in perfect good-humour at the thought of her own consequence and christian charity. She was not long before she brought out a pint of ale with a race of ginger for the children, and a glass of warm elder wine with a bit of toasted bread for their mother.

The two children, who were not so dangerously

ously ill, now soon got better, thanks to Mr. Langford's medicines and Mrs. Pritchard's gingered ale! But it went hard with the other; he lay still moaning and senseless for several days; and it was difficult work to get a spoonful down his throat. However his mother, though half was flabbered at the first, did not give up trying for all that. And by degrees she got the knack of making him swallow out of a small tea-pot, which Mr. Langford desired her to borrow of Mrs. Pritchard. By degrees the lad shewed signs of life, and in a week or nine days the Doctor told her he would certainly recover. She gained her own strength more and more every day. And Mrs. Pritchard who gave her own ale and ginger the credit of the cure, would not let it drop through for want of a mug and a race extraordinary.

One evening, when the danger was all over, Mr. Langford called to see them for the last time. He was a sensible as well as a charitable man; and he had long perceived a good deal amiss in and about the house, besides the sickness. The garden, where there seemed to have been more weeds than potatoes, bespoke a bad fault somewhere. And the condition of the house likewise shewed that Isaac was poverty struck; besides a crazy table, a broken arm chair, a bench and two stools, the furniture consisted principally of an old pot, some porringers without handles, a few cracked trenchers, two or three pewter spoons

spoons battered and beat in at the sides, a bed with two dirty blankets, and a worm-eaten spinning-wheel. This made Mr. Langford strongly suspect Isaac not to be so good to his family as he ought to be; for though she must be a naughty woman indeed, who would not strive all she could for her own small children, when they are sick and likely to die, yet he thought Sarah was uncommonly anxious and attentive; and that she had managed better to nurse them and cook their ale than many a poor woman might have done. And when he recollected what she had dropped and he had imperfectly heard the first time he called, he had little doubt but Isaac was one of those unfeeling, sottish, brutal fathers, who spend the best part of their wages at the alehouse, and leave their families to pine and famish at home, seemingly not caring whether they have a morsel of bread to eat or not.—“And if so,” thought he to himself, “I have done these poor creatures little service at last! Whenever the fever comes across the country again, as sure as can be, it will seize upon them among the first, weak and starvelings as they will be for want of enough to eat. And then ten to one but they perish, for I may not chance to ride by in time! Nay, if no distemper should come, better have died now, than linger on in misery and hunger, without a good belly-full once a month—However Isaac will not be long

“ long now before he comes from work,
 “ and I’ll try what a little talk will do at
 “ least. So lately as he has seen them at
 “ death’s door, if he have the heart, of a man
 “ and not of a brute, he’ll think better here-
 “ after.”

In order to make sure of his ground; he put some questions to Sarah: and soon discovered that his surmises were but too well founded. Isaac was indeed a good deal to be pitied as well as blamed. He was not bad at bottom. When in service, he was sober and thoughtful and saving. And for several years after his marriage, he continued to behave himself kindly and soberly, taking great pleasure in seeing the house clean, and the children well-fed. He killed a pig every year, and brewed some beer at the Wake and at Christmas. His house was clean and the children ruddy and plump; always contented and playful and running about; not dirty, and pale in the cheek and pot-bellied, as if they had the worms; and shivering at every blast and without any life or spirit. But the misfortune of the eldest boy, who was big enough to go about sometimes with his father after the horses, was the beginning of Isaac’s change for the worse. One 5th of November, as he was coming down the hill towards night with three horses and the empty cart, some collier boys let off a cracker, and it bounced till it came into the road, and the horses took fright and set off like mad down the

the hill; and the lad, whom Isaac had put to ride the fore horse because he was tired, was very soon thrown down headlong; and the horses ran and dragged the wheel over his body. It was in vain that Isaac hurried and bawled after the horses. They had trod and crushed the child under foot before he could come up; and all he could do was to carry him home, bleeding and mangled, with his face all one wound. And he actually died the next day, after suffering terrible pain. The Doctor could do nothing for him. For Isaac could then afford to send for a Doctor, when any of his family was sick, as he had contrived to save a pretty spill at service.

As soon as Isaac saw with his own eyes and heard from the Doctor the sad condition of the child, he hied him to the hill in a terrible rage, determined on revenge. The collier lads had however got safe into the pits, and he could not find no traces of them. He returned and wept bitterly over the boy, who was dying in agonies of pain. After his death he could not hold up his head nor work for the first week: and when he returned to his master, he cared not whether he worked or eat. As he was one day coming home quite melancholy, two young men who were standing at Martha's door, persuaded him to drink a draught out of their jug, and then to come into the Horse-Shoe, where they lodged. These were Londoners. They had come down to saw the hollies of the

the Hill into thin boards for fineering. They were jolly companions, got great wages and spent them as merrily as they came. Isaac found relief in the effect of the ale and the wonderful stories he was told about London. He promised to call again the next night. They soon became loving friends; and the ostener Isaac went to the *Horse-Shoe*, the harder he found it to stay away. He soon came to such a pass as never to feel easy but when he was besotted. Little by little, you know, is the way in which men always fall into evil practices. Though the Londoners went off by the end of the month, Isaac had so thoroughly learned the trade of a toper and loved it so dearly, that he would follow it on Saint Monday, Saint Tuesday and Wednesday besides, though he had none to help him. Hence his money soon went, his credit followed after; and at length Martha never put a pint into his hand without throwing his score in his teeth. You have already heard how hard it came to fare with the wife and children at home.

Soon after Mr. Langford had gained this intelligence, Isaac returned from the labour of the day. He had never met with Mr. Langford before, because that gentleman always happened to call about the middle of the day, but he knew him well, having often seen him at Ludlow as well as upon his rides about the country. You may be sure Isaac was not wanting in thankful expressions.

B

And

And to do him justice, he really felt as he spoke. He would have been heartily grieved if his wife had died, though he had so neglected her and treated her so unkindly; and as to the children, he must have been an unnatural monster indeed, if he had not sincerely rejoiced in their recovery. At last, he said "I hope, now you have been so kind
 "and charitable, Sir, as to help them over
 "this bad bout, they will make hearty, honest, men, able to earn their bread without
 "thieving and stealing, or being beholden
 "to any man. And if it should ever be in
 "their power, God shield them! to make
 "any return for the favour, if they scruple
 "to do it, the dogs will deserve to come to
 "as bad an end as their poor brother, Nedd-
 "dy, Christ in mercy receive his soul!"

Mr. Langford. If they do not prove hearty, honest, able men, it will not be *their* fault at least, I dare say, Isaac.

Isaac. Then it shall be no fault of mine, Master, and Sarah, I'll answer for her, will strive her best to rear them.

Mr. Langford. May be so, Isaac, for what I know; but both you and I have learned before to-day, that saying and doing are two things.

Isaac. *Reddening and feeling a little distressed.* I hope, Doctor, you don't think I'd be guilty of any thing to harm or wrong poor helpless infants. No, I'd shed my heart's blood first.

Mr. Lang-

Mr. Langford. No, not knowingly, Isaac: You would not injure them on purpose and from malice aforethought. You would not for instance, dash out their brains against the floor here: nor would you take a great stick and break their bones. Nay, I dare believe, if any man should attempt to do them damage, you would risque your own life to save theirs, even though he were a much flouter man than yourself, or though two men at once or more were to set upon them.

Isaac. Aye, Master, that I would; God in heaven, he knows it.

Sarah. Yes, Sir, I'll be bound for him. He's as fond of the poor things, as he need to be, and he moaned sadly about Neddy. I thought it would have broke his heart.

Mr. Langford. So much the better. I am glad to hear it. I've the higher opinion of Isaac.—But what's the reason then I see them in such plight. The poor children, I vow, have hardly a rag to their backs, and that miserable tatter of a blanket will never keep the cold from them at nights, this winter time. And here these two that have not been ill; they look half famished to death, the very picture of misery; and the house is in shocking repair, and the garden over-run with weeds. And, Sarah, when I called first you had hardly a morsel in the house, nor any money, I verily believe, to lay out for any thing. Have died they would from pure want, if I had not by good luck passed this

way! I don't know at whose door the sin of their death would have lain."

Here Sarah turned away her head and sighed; Isaac was mute, and seemed not to know what to do with his eyes and hands, Mr. Langford paused and looked at him, as if in expectation of an answer. At last when he made none, he continued.

"Yes, Yes, I know very well how it fares with the woman and children, when the husband frequents the alehouse. I have seen their melancholy case but too often. And Isaac, to be plain with him, begins to have the look of a sot."

At this Isaac who had nothing to say for himself, and felt his conscience smite him, thought fit to be affronted, as if that would excuse him to God and his own heart. So, not having sense to see that what Mr. Langford was saying was for his own good as well as his family's, and forgetting how much he was obliged to that good gentleman, he knitted his brows and sullenly replied.

"What's that to any body, I wonder? A man's own is his own I say, to do with it what he pleases: marry, come up, it would be hard indeed if an hard working body could not have a sup of drink to comfort one, because a body happens to be a poor body.—There's Master Simcox, yonder, by the side of the hill; he takes his fill every day, Sundays and all; he never goes sober to bed. Why don't people sermonize him and take him to talk?"

Mr. Lang-

Mr. Langford. He is taken to task pretty severely, I can assure you, Isaac. His legs are beginning to swell, and he has burned his inside so that he has not a sound spot about him, he's worse than a rotten sheep. He may linger on a while, but he'll never have a comfortable day again; he'll die by inches, and, poor mistaken man, he had a constitution that might have held to an hundred. But now his breath will be drowned out of his body. He's on the stool of repentance, but repentance is come too late to serve him.—But Isaac, you seem to be buffed; do you think I mean you any harm? if so, good night, fare you well."

And he walked towards the door. Isaac's heart relented at the sound of the latch, as *Mr. Langford* lifted it up to go out. His feelings told him how scandalous and shameful it would be to let his benefactor go away so, when nobody but himself was to blame. So, going towards the door, "Nay, Sir, please not to leave a body with an ill thought in your head, as if one was unthankful. God he knows, I'd pay you honourably, if I was but able, and pray for you for ever besides. Harm! I do not believe you could ever do any body harm. You have done us too much good—But when you said that if any of those poor harmless babies had died, the sin would have lain at somebody's door, and looked at me as if you meant at mine! the

thought pierced me to the heart, as if it had been a drawn sword."

Mr. Langford let fall the latch and returned. Sarah who had cast a very sorrowful eye towards her friend as he walked away, eagerly reached the bench when she saw him return, and wiping it with her apron, looked him in the face without saying a word; but Mr. Langford easily read the meaning of Sarah's look, and he sat down. Then addressing himself to Isaac, "indeed," says he, "Isaac, I pity you much more than I blame you; and I was not sorry to see that what I said touched you to the quick. Perhaps you were once a sober industrious man, a good husband and father, and have not lived always in the habit of drunkenness; but I cannot conceal the truth; and if instead of bringing home your wages, you have actually been accustomed to spend a good part of them at the alehouse, your family must have suffered; and of this I am afraid I see too many appearances in and about the house. In this case, knowing what I know, I should have imputed the death of any of your family more to the misery you have brought upon them, than to the distemper: for it always takes fastest hold of the weak and puny; and so I would say, if I were to speak upon oath, before a Judge and Jury.

Isaac (looking stedfastly at Mr. Langford to see if he was in earnest, in a tone of great humility and half frightened);

Marry!

Marry! heaven forbid. I hope you don't speak in sober sadness. Lord be merciful to me a sinner! If Death had come and you had told me this, I should have gone distracted.

Mr. Langford (laying down his hat and whip);

Come, Isaac, sit you down; the worst is past; I hope it will come no more, I think I can make you easily feel and acknowledge the truth of what I say, though you are no Doctor.

Isaac. I be no Doctor, to be sure, nor yet a farrier; but for all that, I know how to bleed a horse in the fall of the year. I learned this when I was waggoner to 'Squire Knight.

Mr. Langford (smiling and then looking grave again).

I am glad to hear you are so skilful, Isaac; the more you know of horses and cattle and sheep, the more likely we shall be to agree in our opinions, and the fewer words need I use to explain myself. Now then tell me, suppose there was to be an hard winter, which would stand it best, cattle well foddered and tended, or such as should be left to provide for themselves on the hill?

Isaac. Oh to be sure! those that had plenty of burdens of good hay and straw. The others would be as rough as bears; and their belly would be tucked up quite close to the back-bone; and ten to one but they perished with cold and hunger. Why for the matter of that, only look at my old master 'Squire

Knight's team; the horses all as sleek as a mole and as strong, they could draw you two ton, each: But Thomas Shelton's kephels are so thin and weak, they can hardly lift one leg after the other; this is because he turns them out after work to four grass, almost too short for a sheep to bite, all winter along; and hardly ever gives them a meal of dry meat. 'Tsaith it is easy to know by their looks, when cattle have enough to eat, and when they are stinted.

Mr. Langford. What you say, is very just; they look so forlorn and dull and disconsolate, when they are all skin and bone.— But tell me which stand cold and hardship best, colts and calves, or horses and oxen?

Isaac. Oh, oxen and horses, ten to one; ay, for a single full-grown cow or ox, half a dozen calves and yearlings, I'd wager, are lost in a casualty time; and the same of lambs; and young chickens and ducks and turkeys; all young things have precarious lives, as 'Squire Knight used to say.

Mr. Langford. Aye, and so have young children too, I can assure you, Isaac, as precarious as young turkeys; half that are born, die before they are two years old

Isaac. It stands to reason that they should be a power tenderer"—And he cast a look at his own children, of which the three eldest had got close to him and Mr. Langford, while Sarah nursed the youngest and held the next by

by the hand, listening very attentively to what fell from Mr. Langford.

Mr. Langford. No doubt, you think bread and cheese and potatoes and meat to be the same to us, as hay and straw and oats are to dumb creatures.

Isaac. Yes, Sir, we could not live without the one, nor dumb creatures without the other, or something as good.

Mr. Langford. I suppose now, Isaac, you have known many farmers lose their young cattle for want of tending them and giving them plenty of fodder, especially in these hard times.

Isaac. Aye, that I have, often and over. Why there's Thomas Shelton that I mentioned just now: what makes him so low in the world, but because he cannot find in his heart to hearten his yearlings with a little hay in the frost, or give a drooping beast a feed of oats? So, the neighbours all say of him—*Thomas Shelton must needs grow rich, for he saves the fodder and loses the beast.* Many a time as I have gone by his ground with a burden of straw to my Master Simcox's bullocks, Shelton's kine have come to the gate in the lane, and hung their heads over and lowed so, 'twas pitiful to hear them. For all they were dumb creatures, I knew their meaning, as well as if they had said “give us a mouthful of dry food, for we have more snow than grass to eat, and our bellies are aching with hunger and cold.”

“ No,

“ No, says I, poor moggies, I cannot do that
 “ neither, or else our own cattle will catch
 “ the belly-ache; but I wish with all my
 “ heart Shelton was never to sup a spoonful
 “ of hot broth, nor dip his knife into a
 “ dish of warm liquored potatoes, till he has
 “ foddered you well.”

Mr. Langford. And don't you think your own children have been, many a disconsolate winter's day, as badly off as Shelton's yearlings? or do you suppose children not to get the belly-ache from hunger and cold as well as cattle? or that they are better able to stand hardships? Must not weakness bring disorders upon us as well as upon animals, and make us more liable to fall a prey to any distemper, that happens to seize us?—Isaac, Isaac, Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Have not the neighbours a right to say worse of thee than of Shelton? as for instance, *Thomas Shelton starves his yearlings, but Isaac Jenkins starves his own children.* If *Thomas Shelton is naught, what is Isaac Jenkins?* or dost thou think it a less sin or a less crying shame, to make children miserable than dumb creatures? If thou wast moved by compassion to wish that Shelton might never have a comfortable meal more till he had satisfied his cattle that lowed so mournfully after the fodder over the gate, tell me, have I not a right, when I see thy children pinched by the cold for want of cloaths

cloaths to cover their nakedness, and ravenous with hunger so that they would jump at a mouldy crust; have I not, I say, a right to wish that every drop of ale that goes over thy lips when thou art guzzling at the Horse-Shoe, may set thy teeth on edge, taste like verjuice to thy tongue, and gripe thy stomach, till thou rollest on the ground and writhest, like an horse that has the belly-ache."

Isaac had talked glibly about cattle and horses and sheep, partly to give Mr. Langford a good opinion of his knowledge and partly, I believe, in hopes of putting the thought of his being a sot and drunkard out of Mr. Langford's head. But when he saw every thing he had mentioned turned in this manner against him and heard himself thus condemned out of his own mouth, he was quite staggered; and so overpowered that he had no reply to make. Mr. Langford, as he finished speaking, steadily fixed his eyes upon Isaac's: and Sarah and the children without knowing why imitated this movement of Mr. Langford. The dead silence that followed, and all their looks being upon him with what he had just heard, quite confounded Isaac, and he would almost have been glad, if the Hill had come and covered him. After a short pause, the eldest lad turned his head suddenly towards his mother and enquired very earnestly; " Mammy, Mammy what's
 " the matter with Daddy? he looks for all
 " the world as Stephy used to do, when we
 " had

“ had had no bread nor potatoes to-day.” Then seeming to consider for a moment, he ran to the hearth where Sarah had set down a crock of potatoes and skimmed milk which she was cooking when Mr. Langford came in. He carried the mess to Isaac, and offering him a spoonful cried; “ here, Daddy, eat a mouthful, do now, and donno’ be sick.” This was too much: Isaac hastily pushed back the child’s hand, jumped up from his seat, and walking across the house, folded his arms across the sill of the window, and laid down his forehead upon them, saying not a word. Mr. Langford made a sign to Sarah and the children to hush and sit still. Then taking out his watch he held the chain and seals for the children to admire, and to handle, preventing them all the while from making a noise.

When he thought Isaac had pondered so long upon what he had heard, as not to be likely soon to forget it, he went on, Isaac still leaning upon the window-sill; “ Ablind man may see that the right way to make children wicked is to use them ill and to famish them. Nay, this is the way in which children come to do wicked things before they have a notion what wickedness is. In the first place, what is it that is apt to make children or grown persons sour-tempered? why, to be always in pain and suffering; and is not a child that has seldom his belly full, constantly in pain? does not he feel an ugly gnawing

ing within; and get snarlifh and fretful and down-looked? Besides, he has no pleasure in himfelf, and he can like nobody elfe; for nobody does him any good, and what makes children love their parents, but their being good to them?—Then again—don't be affronted, Sarah, as Ifaac was, I mean your children no difparagement—would you foonest truft a dog that is well fed, or one that is as gaunt as a wolf? do not dogs, that are only fkin and bone, prowl about every where and ranfack other folks' houfes, and feize upon every thing they can get at? I have known fuch dogs many a time tear a joint of meat from the spit. And a child, raving as it were, with hunger, depend upon it, will have the fame thievifh difpofition, though, poor thing, he knows no more than the dog what a fin it is to fteal. You faid, Ifaac, that you hoped thefe lads would come to earn their bread honeftly without thieving or ftealing; Every parent that has any fenfe or honefty, muft wifh the fame for his children. But whether they think about it or not, fure enough every man that keeps his children in mifery, does his beft to breed them for the gallows; and this is a pretty thought for a man to carry about with him! One would think it muft damp his fpirits in fpite of all the ale in Mrs. Pritchard's cellar!"—Here Ifaac raifed up his head, and Sarah whofe eyes were fixed on Mr. Langford, lifted them up, and opening her eyelids as wide afunder as they

they would go, fervently whispered " *Mercy*
" *forbid!*"

" Every parent, to be sure, (a poor man as much as a rich) wishes his children to do well; now when they are big enough to go out in the world, people are fond of taking those that have had honest, sober, industrious fathers and mothers; and every body must see *that for a parent to bear a fair character is as good as a portion to a child.*—But who will have any thing to do with boys or girls that have been kept ragged and dirty and idle, and mayhap have become thieves, because they had the misfortune to have naughty fathers or mothers? Why, people will be afraid to take them into their houses; or if they happen to hire them, because they are in distress for a servant, they will still look upon them with an evil eye.—Ah, believe me, there would be little wickedness in the world, if there was no distress.—Vice almost always begins among the poor from misery, and among the rich from idleness.

And how cowardly it is besides, to tyrannize over those that can make no resistance! If a grown person were to set upon a child to fight him, he would be hooted out of the parish and never hear the last of it. And yet he would not do him perhaps half the injury, by a little bruising and by making his nose bleed, as if he was to rob him of half his meat every day. And where's the difference, tell me, between a man tearing the bread
out

out of his children's hands, and spending the money that should go to buy them bread, at the alehouse? I see none in the world for my part.—Suppose, Isaac, you felt any day a longing desire for some ale and had no money in your pocket, but came into the house just as Sarah had taken the last loaf out of the cupboard, and with a knife in her hand was dividing it among the children; and the little ones round her all hungry and eager, and each lifting up his hands for his share, could you find in your heart to snatch the loaf and carry it to the *Horse-Shoe* to change it for ale, disappointing all in the house of their meal and leaving them to starve?—I know you could not—Then consider well and try if you can find any difference between the barbarity of selling your bread for ale, and spending your wages in ale before they are turned into bread.

There's another matter too that I must not forget, since we are talking upon the subject. Do you think Sarah here would ever have consented to have you, if she could possibly have foreseen the misery your unfortunate turn was to bring upon her children? for I do not suppose that she reproaches you much in her mind with her own sufferings? and yet God knows they have been severe enough—Is not a man who turns out so deceitful, a liar as well as a coward; nay worse than a liar, for he is downright perjured and forsworn; If you were to go to the assizes
and

and bear false witness so as to bring some loss or penalty upon your neighbour, you would yourself be put into the pillory; and you would deserve the punishment. Then tell me, is there any thing worse in breaking oaths taken at the assizes, than promises made of your own accord, and afterwards repeated before God and man, in as solemn a manner as ever oath was taken. Will you say that there's no law against breaking the promises you made out of church and in church to Sarah? Suppose there was no law against murder, or you were sure to escape detection, would you think it no crime to kill me and rob me of my watch and what money I may have about me.—You have heard, *Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you*—So pray, put yourself in Sarah's place, and Sarah in yours, and consider within yourself whether you would have a right or not to complain, if she had gone on as you have—Men (and women too) when they have no restraint upon their will, often make a bad use of their power; and of all the tyrannies under the sun, I believe the tyranny of some husbands (rich as well as poor) to be the most cruel. I know a country where they have lately made a law against such family tyrants; and I hope we shall soon have such a law in this country; for I see no reason why one wicked or one foolish man should have it in his power to trample upon the peace of a whole family, and make them pass

pass their days in sorrow. Let there be always a way, say I, of making those do right who do not choose to do it of their own accord; and let no vicious or obstinate person pretend to set up his will in the place of reason, and think to practice his pranks at the expence of others: much less of those whom he is in honour and duty bound to make as happy as it is in his power to make them.—As to yourself, you know best, Isaac, whether you went out to your work and came back to your home most light-hearted formerly when it was warm and comfortable and you had a flitch of bacon hanging up at the cieling to cut a rasher whenever you liked, or now, when it is, to own the truth, hardly fit to house a pig—You know this best, I say, and I leave you to compare notes with yourself on this head.—I wish with all my heart things could be so ordered that every poor family should be comfortably clad and plentifully fed, and have besides wherewithal to make decently merry at times; and I hope this may come to be the case. And so it might be in many a family at present, if the father did not so sottishly waste the great wages he gets; and they were laid out for the support and comfort of all. But labouring men must first learn the difference between beastliness and chearfulness, and they must be disposed to share every farthing, that is spent in making merry, with their wives and children at home—why, what would you think

of one of your children, if I were to give him a great piece of apple-pye, and he should refuse to let any of the rest taste a bit! and which ought to be most considerate, a parent or his child?"

You may have it in your head, perhaps, that if you should poison yourself outright with drink, or come to be unable to work—
"there's the parish—it is but coming to that at last for yourself or family, just as may happen"—
 Alas! parish allowance, believe me (as you and yours have lately felt) is poor work; just enough to keep body and soul together; and what right has a person, who has taken no care for himself and his children, to expect that others should be at the charge of supporting them in ease and plenty?—God forbid, those that fall into distress without any fault of their own, should be left to perish for want of help! but if none but such came to be troublesome to parishes, they would be much better done by, and all their neighbours, that could afford it, would be sending them something good. But now the poor's rates run so high, from the fault of many among the poor themselves! and people are forced to pay so much, that they have many of them, nothing left to give! so you see how those, that wilfully bring themselves upon the parish, are rogues to those that God Almighty brings! and hinder persons who have always behaved themselves industriously and soberly, from being so well done by as they
 other-

otherwise would, when distress befalls them!"

Here Mr. Langford finished his remonstrance to Isaac upon the folly and criminality of spending his wages at the alehouse. He rose and slipped half a crown into Sarah's hand, putting his finger upon his lips in token of silence. She had sense to comprehend him and to hold her tongue as she was bid. She therefore contented herself with putting on her most thankful look. He then said, "Isaac, go and lead my horse into the road: He is fastened on the snug side of the house where there is no wind. Make haste, for I have been talking here till I have oversteaid my time." He was mounted in a trice and off on the trot, away towards Ludlow.

"But I hope there's more of the History to come—what became of Sarah and the children? did Isaac take up and become good?"—"Why, my good reader, what would you have done in Isaac's case"—"Oh, brought all my wages and given them to Sarah to lay out, and never any more have gone within the *Horse-Shoe* door to drink, if I had lived to the age of Methusalem: besides, I'd have got some clay and plaistered the walls at nights to keep the cold out: for, as good Mr. Langford said,

C 2

"a man

“ a man who spends his money upon his
 “ own belly and leaves his family to starve,
 “ is no better than a coward, a tyrant and a
 “ brute; aye and more than half forsworn
 “ into the bargain.”——

“ You are very right: it is too true; and
 “ I hope every honest poor man who hears
 “ of Sarah's and the children's danger and
 “ distress, will think as you do, and act ac-
 “ cordingly. I believe for my part, that
 “ the poor are well disposed, and do wrong
 “ oftener for want of knowing better, than
 “ from wickedness of heart.”——“ But I am
 “ afraid Isaac's score at the Horse-Shoe
 “ would be a sore thorn in his side, if he
 “ was ever so well inclined. It is an hard
 “ matter for a labouring body that has but
 “ low wages to get himself out of debt when
 “ he once gets in overhead, or only up to
 “ the knees. But how much was his score
 “ in all, I pray?”——“ I was afraid too
 “ that the debt would lay him under diffi-
 “ culties; and like you, I was anxious to
 “ learn whether Isaac reformed, especially
 “ as I know what an hard matter it is to
 “ break bad habits; I was also very sorry for
 “ Sarah, for I thought the first time I heard
 “ the above account that she behaved well
 “ all the way through; and when I enquired
 “ in the country, where I lately was, I was
 “ told she had borne a good character all
 “ the time she was in service; and that
 “ though she did not, when a girl, foolishly
 “ lay

“ lay out her money in tawdry ribbands and
 “ frippery, she was always very tight and clean
 “ on a Sunday—If you had seen her then,
 “ you would not have known her again; she
 “ was so much altered by Isaac’s unkind-
 “ ness. Accordingly, I wrote to Mr. Lang-
 “ ford, with whom I am well acquainted,
 “ for an account of what followed; and he
 “ was so obliging as to inform me by letter
 “ of the following particulars.—You shall
 “ read them in his own words.”

*Letter from Mr. Langford to the person that
draws up this account.*

Ludlow, June 3rd, 1792.

My dear Friend,

Although it be now going on for
 ten years, since it happened, I still distinctly
 remember my attendance on the wife and
 children of Isaac Jenkins; and I shall, I can
 assure you, always remember it with satis-
 faction. Soon after their recovery, I held a
 long and earnest conversation with Isaac on
 the heinous practice of drunkenness in the
 father of a numerous family. To this con-
 versation the late and present condition of
 his family was, I thought, likely, if any thing
 possibly could, to give effect; so I left him
 C 3 abruptly.

abruptly. Besides the necessity I was under
 of so doing, I thought this a measure of good
 policy. An attempt on my part to humble
 him by extorting a full confession of his guilt,
 might only set him upon devising some excuse
 or defence; and though he could have been
 brought to make the fairest promises of a-
 mendment at the moment, he might have
 thought himself acquitted by a parcel of
 empty words, and not have altered his con-
 duct at all. On this account I thought it
 best for himself and his family, that the mat-
 ter should remain in suspense, that what he
 had seen and heard might have the chance
 of sinking deep into his mind. Though it
 should prey upon his spirits awhile, I thought
 it would do no harm in the long run. In
 about two months afterwards my business carry-
 ing me that way again, I took the opportunity
 of calling at Isaac's. He was not at home.
 But I was pleased to see things wearing a bet-
 ter aspect. The house smelled sweet and
 fresh, as I entered the door. The door itself
 was mended, clumsily indeed, but so as to
 keep out most of the wind—it was evidently
 Isaac's handy-work. The walls were coar-
 sely plaistered anew, where they wanted. The
 cloaths of the children were all patched in-
 deed, but no longer ragged, the rents being
 all sewed. The injunctions that I had laid
 upon Sarah respecting the cleanliness of the
 house and the place before the door, had
 been punctually complied with. Cheerful-
 ness

ness and content fate upon the countenances of the three younger children. The two elder were gone with their father to the sheep-washing. After I had surveyed the improved condition of the house, Sarah opened the cupboard-door and handed down three-fourths of a good substantial loaf with a piece of thick pale-faced cheese of the country; and she looked at me significantly, as much as to say, "times are mended since you were here last: the fare may be coarse, but a bellyful is a bellyful." — I found from her account, that Isaac after I went away had said but little on the subject of my remonstrance. But he had thought and done so much the more; so far from shewing any inclination to the Horse-Shoe, she verily believed that he turned aside his head as he passed the house.—She informed me that the day he brought home the half-cheese and was cutting a slice for each of the children, she said to him; "there look at Jim, if he is not getting fat and cherry-cheeked, the rogue! though he was so near his end a little while ago." Isaac seemed first pleased at the thought, then looked grave, and muttered "all might be well yet, if it were not for one thing:" this he afterwards owned to her was Mrs. Pritchard's score, almost twenty shillings! and "then the Doctor's bill for stuff;" he should never be easy till these were paid, and how he should ever contrive to pay them, he did not know.

This was the very way I wished what I said to work upon Isaac; so I entertained hopes of an effectual reform. It was fortunate for him that he was from time to time called up-stairs to lift his master Simcox from the bed to his chair. This poor man was now daily growing worse and worse; and at last became an hideous spectacle, quite a monster, with his legs and belly enormously swelled, his face bloated, and gasping for breath; he was now in his sickness as penitent, as he had been before confident in the Heyday of health and high spirits that drinking would never hurt him; good sound ale, he used to say, could never hurt any man. It was your doctored wash at public-houses that did the mischief. One day a dreadful fit of hard breathing seized him, his daughter cried out for somebody to come up-stairs and help, for her father was dying; Isaac was in the kitchen below, supping a piggin of milk-porridge. He hurried up-stairs directly; what a sight to behold! the swollen unwieldy farmer with his face as black as your hat, snapping for a mouthful of air; and when he was raised and had recovered his breath a little, repeating in a doleful tone out of the Psalms—*My strength faileth me, because of my iniquity; and my bones are consumed; My wickednesses are gone over my head; and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.* He had numbers of verses by heart, for he had been one of your constant church-goers, who think them-

themselves quit and absolved for a bad life if they do but regularly every week cry *Amen* along with the Clerk of the parish.

In the progress of Simcox's disorder his legs burst, and the holes at which the water oozed out, began to mortify. Once on a time as Isaac was sitting with him—it was on a Sunday afternoon—and his daughter was dressing the wounds, he would look at his legs and every now and then cry out; *My sores stink and are corrupt, through my foolishness; I am brought into so great trouble and misery that I go mourning all the day long;—there is no whole part in my body!*—This and much more to the same purpose Isaac reported to me; and all things taken together, you cannot wonder if these penitential ejaculations made a much deeper impression upon him than all the sermons he had ever heard in his life.

But to return to Sarah and the house. I had beforehand determined within myself, if I saw sufficient hopes of Isaac's amendment to pay off the score at the Horse-Shoe, and take the debt upon myself. It is impossible to paint to you Sarah's joy and astonishment and gratitude when I took out a guinea and half, and bade her go and settle her own account and Isaac's with Mrs. Pritchard. I told her that I could afford to trust as well as Mrs. Pritchard, that perhaps she would rather have me for a creditor than that fair-spoken gentlewoman, and that Isaac might pay me by little at a time, taking care not to
put

put his family on short allowance for this purpose—He has now for some time been out of my debt. I did not scruple to let him pay me for the medicines also. I thought he would feel better satisfied with himself and a more independant man. You will not wonder however, that I indulged myself in the pleasure of presenting Sarah with a piece of strong coarse stuff for a gown. It was easy for me to procure a place for each of her children, as he became fit for service.

Isaac, though for a long time tongue-tied upon the subject of his own conduct, now takes pleasure in relating every circumstance. And as he has a flow of words with plenty of proverbs and country sayings, he makes it up into an interesting story.

It happened that the Holly-sawyers, his old pot companions, whom he calls his *Comforters*, came to saw up another fall of Hollies, about the time that Isaac was beginning to be a thriving man again. The first day they met, after some very hearty shakes of the hand, they invited him to come to their quarters and renew old acquaintance. Isaac thanked them kindly, but said he could not possibly meet them that evening; it was Saturday; but if they would come to his cottage the next day towards the fall of night, he would treat them with a bit of cold meat, warm potatoes, and a sup of *perish* beer which he had remaining after the wake. They readily accepted the invitation. After

ter supper he related his adventures; and "now" says he, "Gentlemen," looking at them with an air of defiance, when he had told the whole story, "after this you are welcome to try to 'tice me to big Martha's, if you think yourselves able."

I do not suppose they pressed him much; but Isaac was firm and not to be shaken from his purpose. He had felt too sensibly the difference between beggary with drunkenness and discontent, and plenty with sobriety and a light, chearful heart—And may every labouring-man, say I, who keeps his family in good plight, persevere in well-doing, and have the satisfaction of seeing his children thrive under his eye and prosper like healthy plants; and may those who have been unfortunately misled like Isaac, into the practice of sotting at public-houses, take pattern by him, and once more become kind husbands and parents: You may be sure, my good friend, that to this their wives and children will all cry—AMEN, SO BE IT—And so farewell for the present. I remain

Yours to command

JOSIAH LANGFORD.

End of the History of Isaac Jenkins.

